



US Army Training and Doctrine Command

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Three-Event APFT Retained Pending Baseline Soldier Physical Readiness Study (*IMTCofE Public Affairs*, By Stephanie Slater) TRADOC found that implementing changes to how the Army assesses physical fitness would be premature. "We anticipate that the baseline Soldier physical readiness study, linked to Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills, may generate new information that affects how we develop and test physical fitness," said TRADOC Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel A. Dailey.

New Manuals Form Base of Training Doctrine (*Combined Arms Center-Training*, By William Brosnan) The new manuals are part of the Doctrine 2015 that restructures how the Army develops and publishes doctrinal manuals. Several of these new manuals have already been put into print, such as Army Doctrine Publications 3-0 and 5-0, but on Aug. 31, it is expected that most of the remaining foundational manuals will be complete and made available to the public.

Licensing and Credentialing – Progress and Speed Bumps (*The American Legion*, By Craig Roberts) Susan Schoeppler of TRADOC, quoted numbers, noting that the services catalog approximately 2,000 discrete military occupational codes, about 1,200 of which are relatable to civilian licenses and certifications. TRADOC is pursuing congressionally mandated pilot programs in specific occupational areas. Their completion will help in the development of more "across-the-board" policies and procedures for military-to-civilian licensing.

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Congress Ready for Reform: Female Service Members Victimized By Sexual Assault Need Help (*New York Daily News*, By Alison Gendar and Heidi Evans) Under pressure from Congress and veterans advocates, SecDef Panetta has said "even one assault is too many" and has announced several new policies to combat sexual assault in the ranks. They include expanding legal assistance and quicker transfers for victims from their perpetrators.

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IMTCofE Public Affairs

Three-Event APFT Retained Pending Baseline Soldier Physical Readiness Study

By Stephanie Slater

FORT EUSTIS, Va. -- The Army will retain the current three-event Army Physical Fitness Test, pending a study to determine the best method to measure baseline Soldier physical readiness.

U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command found that implementing changes to how the Army assesses physical fitness would be premature.

"We anticipate that the baseline Soldier physical readiness study, linked to Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills, may generate new information that affects how we develop and test physical fitness," said TRADOC Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel A. Dailey.

WHAT WAS PROPOSED?

In 2011, TRADOC implemented a physical fitness training philosophy that Soldiers are better prepared if they train how they would fight. This prompted the Army Physical Fitness School to reevaluate a Soldier's physical capabilities.

A five-event Army Physical Readiness Test, or APRT, was developed and proposed to replace the current three-event APFT. The proposed test eliminated situps and included the following: 60-yard shuttle run, one-minute rower, standing long jump, one-minute pushup and 1.5-mile run.

More than 10,000 Soldiers worldwide participated in pilot testing of the APRT. After reviewing the data, TRADOC commissioned an independent panel to validate the proposed five-event APRT.

WHY RETAIN THE THREE-EVENT APFT?

In separate reports, the panel of fitness experts from the Department of Physical Education at U.S. Military Academy, the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command, and California State University-Fullerton recommended against moving forward with the proposed five-event APRT and that TRADOC further study the issue.

The panel of subject matter experts agreed that the five-event Army Physical Readiness Test has "face validity" only, meaning that although it appears to measure what it claims to measure, further study would be required to confirm. Additionally, experts agreed that TRADOC should consider other events that may better predict baseline Soldier physical readiness. Soldier baseline physical readiness is the ability to meet the physical demands of combat and duty position, and accomplish the mission while conducting unified land operations.

TRADOC has determined that baseline Soldier physical readiness would be most effectively measured if linked to Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills, known as WTBD -- tasks and drills determined over the last decade of war to be critical while conducting unified land operations.



Given the independent study, and the logic of linking fitness to WTBD, TRADOC will initiate a comprehensive study of Soldier fitness requirements to determine the best method to measure baseline Soldier physical readiness. The objective of the study is to select and recommend test events that have a functional connection to WTBD, and accurately measure baseline fitness against valid performance standards. The study is expected to begin in October 2012 and will include fitness experts from across the Army.

Decisions to change long-standing and proven systems of physical fitness are not made lightly, or prematurely, said the TRADOC command sergeant major.

"Emerging factors and changing combat environments demand a thorough understanding before changes are implemented, and thus the decision to retain the current test," Dailey said. "Whatever the new test looks like, it must accurately evaluate fitness levels for all Soldiers to decisively win in combat."

WHAT'S NEXT?

TRADOC is preparing to reestablish the master fitness trainer program. Targeting noncommissioned officers, this program, discontinued in 2001, will eventually provide commanders at all levels certified fitness advisers. A pilot master fitness training course, or MFTC, begins Aug. 27, 2012, to ensure that the appropriate steps are taken to restore this previously successful physical fitness asset to all units.

"Bringing back MFTC will standardize unit physical training and increase unit readiness across the Army," Dailey said, referring to the doctrine in TC 3-22.20 Army Physical Readiness Training (Aug. 2010).

TC 3-22.20 focuses unit training on developing Soldier physical readiness required to perform WTBD. WTBD are the fundamental combat skills which all Soldiers, regardless of rank, age, gender or military occupational specialty, must perform in order to fight and win on the battlefield. To strengthen the emphasis on implementing physical readiness training doctrine Army wide, TRADOC will also transition TC 3-22.20 Physical Readiness Training to Field Manual 7-22 Physical Readiness Training in fall 2012.

"It's time to break the culture of 'training to the test' and focus instead on preparing all Soldiers for the physical challenges of the current and future operating environment. Executing physical training in accordance with the doctrine [TC 3-22.20] will also reduce injuries and improve Soldier performance on the APFT," Dailey said.

"TRADOC recognizes that leaders will continue to assess unit physical training needs based on the mission and the OE and adjust training as necessary, but the place to start is the TC."

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Combined Arms Center-Training

New Manuals Form Base of Training Doctrine

By William Brosnan

Fort Leavenworth, Kan. — The Army will soon publish a new series of manuals that will reflect a different approach to writing doctrine and lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The new manuals are part of the Doctrine 2015 that restructures how the Army develops and publishes doctrinal manuals. Several of these new manuals have already been put into print, such as Army Doctrine Publications 3-0 and 5-0, but on Aug. 31, it is expected that most of the remaining foundational manuals will be complete and made available to the public.

As part of this effort, the Army will replace Field Manual 7-0, "Training Units and Developing Leaders for Full Spectrum Operations," with two new manuals: Army Doctrine Publication 7-0 and Army Doctrine Reference Publication 7-0.

Both are titled "Training Units and Developing Leaders." Together they will form the foundation of Army training management doctrine.

The effort reflects the Army's strategy to update current doctrine based on the lessons learned from more than a decade of persistent operations.

Army Doctrine Publication 7-0 will be a short overview, describing the concepts of Army training and training management.

It will include a discussion of the three training domains, institutional, operational and self-development, as well as a discussion of leader development and training management concepts. ADP 7-0 is one of a handful of Army keystone manuals approved directly by the Army's chief of staff.

Army Doctrine Reference Publication 7-0 includes much more content and is comparable with the current version of FM 7-0 — at least in length and general subject matter — but that's where the similarities end.

To reinforce the Army maxim, "train as you will fight," ADRP 7-0 will establish the Army's two operations planning processes — the military decision-making process and troop-leading procedures — as the processes units use to plan, prepare and execute unit training.

Of particular importance are the responsibilities and roles of commanders and other leaders in training their organizations and leaders. The ADP and ADRP address these responsibilities in detail.

The ADRP also replaces the legacy construct of long-range, short-range and near-term planning with the Unit Training Plan. These changes will reinforce the operations and planning concepts all Army units employ.

Even with the changes, accessing Army training information will remain the same. Unit training management on the website Army Training Network will continue to be the go-to resource to understand the details of the training management doctrine and best practices.



Army Doctrine Reference Publication 7-0 and unit training management are tightly linked. The concepts in chapter three of the ADRP, entitled "Unit Training Management," are tied directly to the details of these concepts in ATN's Unit Training Management section.

Unit Training Management content is developed by the same agency that developed the ADP and ADRP 7-0, the Army's Training Management Directorate at Fort Leavenworth.

In addition, Unit Training Management points users to the web-based tools that guide them through the process — the Digital Training Management System, the Combined Arms Training Strategies and the Department of the Army Standardized Mission Essential Task List for brigade and above units.

At each critical point in Unit Training Management, there are relevant tutorials and examples that provide expanded instructions on how these tools support the training management process.

Unit Training Management is accessed from a single web portal — Army Training Network. Users can view Unit Training Management content in an online format or download content in PDF format/PowerPoint modules for professional development and classroom instruction.

To understand Army training, Soldiers should read ADP 7-0, ADRP 7-0 and UTM. Look for these products on Army Training Network Aug. 31. To access Army Training Network, go to <https://atn.army.mil>. The PDF manuals also can be accessed from the Army Publishing Directorate website at <https://apd.army.mil>.

Training Management Directorate is part of the Combined Arms Center-Training that develops and supports training throughout the Army. More information about CAC-T and TMD can be found at <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/CAC-T/>.

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The American Legion

Licensing and Credentialing – Progress and Speed Bumps

By Craig Roberts

A baker's dozen veterans employment advocates gathered in Indianapolis at The American Legion's national convention to update one another – and an audience of Legionnaires – on their commonly waged campaign to streamline civilian licensing and credentialing of job-seeking servicemembers and veterans.

Members of the Legion's Economic Commission listened intently for nearly five hours to the assembly of federal officials and industry stakeholders, most of whom had participated in a groundbreaking, Legion-led Licensing and Credentialing Summit in Washington this past February. It was that initial two-day conference and recently enacted federal legislation that were cited as primary drivers behind what is being lauded as dramatic progress on the issue of post-service credentialing of appropriately trained and experienced military personnel.

In Late July, President Obama signed into law the Veteran Skills to Jobs Act which directs "the head of each Federal department and agency to treat relevant military training as sufficient to satisfy training or certification requirements for Federal licenses." This primarily affects certifications issued by the federal aviation, communications and maritime agencies. In concert with this legislation is a section of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, signed last November, which directs government study of this concept's other practical applications.

Lisa Lutz, a policy analyst who has been working with the Legion on this issue since the mid-1990s, began the discussion by identifying three key prerequisites a license or certification seeker must complete. The first, she said, was meeting an academic requirement. This can range from completion of relatively short term classroom study and/or hands-on practical work to the longer term earning of a college level degree.

This training requirement, said Lutz, is proving to be the most challenging for servicemembers and veterans to meet. Satisfying a credentialing body's experience requirement is far easier, said Lutz, since relevant military experience is commonly recognized in the civilian world. The passing of a written, oral and/or practical examination is the third requirement for licensing or certification, said Lutz. The taking of many exams requires payment of a fee. With this, Lutz said, GI Bill financial assistance is available. The GI Bill and, in the case of active duty personnel, Department of Defense (DoD) tuition assistance can defray some training costs as well, said Lutz.

In contrast to the not-too-distant past, Lutz said, nearly every military occupation can be directly or indirectly related to civilian credentialing today. These include, according to her, occupations that appear to be military-specific, such as weapons management. Even they often utilize "embedded" skills such as those employed in civilian information technology specialties.

Susan Schoeppler of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, quoted numbers, noting that the services catalog approximately 2,000 discrete military occupational codes, about 1,200 of which are relatable to civilian licenses and certifications.



Her command, which oversees the Army's intramural education, is pursuing congressionally mandated pilot programs in specific occupational areas. Their completion will help in the development of more "across-the-board" policies and procedures for military-to-civilian licensing.

DoD's Marion Cain told of her department's financial stake in streamlining civilian credentialing of veterans. The alarmingly high unemployment rate among young veterans is reflective, in part, of civilian licensing practices that delay or prevent employment of qualified former servicemembers. DoD and, by extension, taxpayers have to pay a portion of unemployment compensation to vets. That cost in 2011 alone was \$917-million, said Cain.

Ed Kringer of the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) spoke of burdens placed on already licensed and certified military spouses who often lose professional privileges whenever their family moves to another licensing jurisdiction or the pursuit of their occupation is interrupted. This, said Kringer, not only causes personal hardship for the affected spouse, but also threatens retention rates, as disgruntled wives or husbands pressure their spouses to leave the military.

Roundtable participants agreed that the new federal legislation was accelerating their movement at an unprecedented rate. Speaking of the VOW Act, "Junior" Ortiz, acting assistant secretary in charge of the Department of Labor's Veterans Training and Employment Service (VETS), said, "it gave us teeth." Ray Decker of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management announced a recent, significant increase in the percentage of veterans employed in federal jobs.

Yet, many challenges remain. Lutz reminded listeners that only about 10 percent of all credentialing entities are accredited, thus calling into question the viability and employability of some credentials. Several other roundtable participants identified reasons why credentials should not necessarily be hastily issued to military and former military personnel. Selden Fritschner of the U.S. Department of Transportation and Elizabeth Belcaster of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters raised safety, insurance and bonding concerns that could be created by "rubber stamping" veterans with some civilian licenses.

Dr. Amy Dufrane of the HR (Human Resources) Certification Institute was among those who addressed the fact that technical skills gained in the military were, in many instances, more easily transferable to the civilian workplace than so-called "soft skills." Warren Lupson of the Air Conditioning, Heating and Refrigeration Institute, Tony Molla of the National Institute of Automotive Service Excellence, Victory Media's William Offutt and Prudential Financial's Ray Weeks leant their views and expertise to the private sector aspects of the discussion.

Early on, Ed Kringer of OSD told how his office was formulating "model legislation" that would carry a successful military-to-civilian licensing and certification effort to all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. Since a significant number, if not the majority, of licenses and employment certifications are granted by states, it is essential, say campaigners, that their message be conveyed to every state house. As it stands, 26 states grant selected license skills test waivers to qualified servicemembers and veterans. Ten states and D.C. are working on legislation to grant such waivers. Yet, 14 states still do not recognize skills gained in the military by license applicants, and in many states not all disciplines requiring certifications have been addressed.

Roundtable participants and Legionnaires attending the session agreed that Legion members have the will and way to mobilize and influence their home legislatures in the licensing the certification campaign.



As Lutz said at meeting's end, "Much of the discussion was a really good example of how the Legion can tackle specifically a single issue – in this case state licensure –get that information out to Legionnaires and have them do something collectively, and correctively, about it."

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Defense News

U.S. Army Wants New Bulldozer Sims

By Michael Peck

There's earth to be moved, and the U.S. Army wants simulators to teach soldiers how to do it. On Aug. 20, the Army put out a solicitation for a Construction Equipment Virtual Trainer (CEVT) able to simulate multiple machines performing both basic and advanced maneuvers.

The result will be a \$50 million to \$80 million contract when the Request for Proposal is released by the first quarter of fiscal 2013, with the actual five-year contract awarded by the fourth quarter of that year, according to the Army's Program Executive Office for Simulation, Training and Instrumentation (PEO STRI). The solicitation deadline is Sept. 28.

The CEVT will simulate five vehicles: the John Deere 240 hydraulic excavator, Caterpillar 120M grader, Caterpillar 924H wheel loader, Caterpillar D7R dozer and Caterpillar 621G scraper. There will also be three simulator types: a stationary simulator for training in start-up and vehicle maneuvers, a basic motion-based simulator and an enhanced motion-based simulator with a fully enclosed cab.

The Army stipulated that the trainer must simulate both standard and armored configurations of construction equipment and must be reconfigurable to different vehicles by one person within one hour. The contract will be for 592 trainers, 128 of which will be mobile versions clustered in four trainers apiece.

The new CEVT will replace stationary simulators that were fielded on an emergency basis at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., in 2008, according to Kien Le, PEO STRI's CEVT systems engineer. The new CEVT will teach multiple tasks involving construction vehicles, including leveling earth, excavating a trench, constructing a stockpile and loading a haul unit, all under various weather and visibility conditions. Instructors will be able to throw in malfunctioning equipment, pesky civilians or objects that get in the way, enemy forces and improvised explosive devices.

An instructor will control up to 12 simulators from his control station for individual training, and more for collective training. Besides the customary after-action review, PEO STRI wants an open architecture design for ease of modification and the ability to integrate with the Synthetic Environment Core (SE Core) terrain generator and the One Semi-Automated Forces (OneSAF) computer-generated forces simulation. The Army, like other branches of the military, is trying to save money and time by making sure multiple systems play nicely together.

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Stars and Stripes

Army Study Finds That Troops Suffer Concussions in Training

By Joaquin Sapien and Daniel Zwerdling

A new military study has found that almost 6 percent of soldiers who took hand-to-hand combat courses at a Texas Army base were struck in the head and suffered symptoms the Pentagon says are consistent with concussions, also called mild traumatic brain injuries.

Over the last decade, hundreds of thousands of soldiers have taken such classes – called “combatives” – at bases nationwide before deploying overseas.

Researchers stress that the study is relatively small, drawing from classes at Ft. Hood with just under 2,000 soldiers. And they haven’t finished the study yet. But the preliminary results have sparked concern among brain specialists inside and outside the military, suggesting that some soldiers went to war in Iraq and Afghanistan having suffered mild traumatic brain injuries in training – and might have been more vulnerable to long-term consequences from additional concussions later.

“The more hits your brain takes, the less likely it will be that you will have a full recovery,” said Dr. Alex Dromerick, director of neuroscience research at the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Washington, D.C.

Retired Lt. Col. Michael Russell, who is leading the Army study, said he wouldn’t comment on it until the final version is released.

Col. Carl Castro, the director of the Military Operational Medicine Research Program, which funded the study, said the final results might dictate changes to improve safety. Castro said there is no acceptable number of concussions for a training program, if there’s any way to avoid them.

“Even 1 percent of soldiers would concern me,” he said. “I’d say we need to do something. We don’t want soldiers getting injured while training, if we can prevent it.”

Mild traumatic brain injuries have been called the “signature wound” of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 244,000 such injuries, both from explosions and accidents, have been diagnosed among troops since 2000. Reports published in 2010 by ProPublica and NPR found that because of missed diagnoses and underreporting, the true figures are likely far higher.

Most people recover from concussions quickly, but some suffer lasting effects, such as memory loss, difficulty reading and frequent headaches.

The study, which began last summer, was designed to assess computerized tests for detecting concussions, comparing the military’s testing tool to another one used by professional sports leagues. (An investigation published last year by ProPublica and NPR found that because of flaws and misuse, the testing program is ineffective.)



Researchers recruited soldiers who reported concussion symptoms, and asked them to take the two tests. Their test results were compared to those produced by soldiers who hadn't been concussed within the previous six months or had no concussion history.

All soldiers must take at least 22 hours of the first level combatives course during basic training. The fighting techniques are drawn from Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, boxing, wrestling and various martial arts.

Some troops receive additional, advanced training, but researchers say their observations suggest that soldiers at level one may be at the greatest risk for concussions, partly because of inexperience.

One of the early training routines, the "clinch and punch" drill, requires one soldier to throw a punch and another to try to avoid it by "clinching" the attacker's arms. But the "clinchers" sometimes don't know how to properly defend against the punch and get hit repeatedly in the head, researchers said.

It's especially a problem for female troops, who often are much smaller than their male opponents, said retired Army Col. Harvey Watson, a psychologist who is conducting field research for the Army study.

"I can tell you that it appears as if women in those kinds of drills become concussed— percentage wise— more often than men," Watson said. "Imagine this guy at six-two or six-three, who weighs two-hundred and ten pounds, who's given the word to punch the clincher, who's a woman of five-three or five-four, a hundred and ten, a hundred and thirty pounds. He's smacking her pretty good, in the head."

Officials at Fort Hood did not respond to multiple requests from ProPublica and NPR to observe combatives classes there, but reporters were allowed to watch advanced students learn how to teach the combatives course at Fort Benning in Georgia.

In late March, the class gathered in a large building with walls adorned with brightly colored banners displaying the names of winning regiments in inter-military fighting tournaments.

The soldiers started off with stretching and warm-up exercises, and then moved on to drills that teach kicking, punching, and grappling techniques.

In one, 10 soldiers paired off, facing each other in a large circle.

"Combo two!... Get Ready!... Begin!" the instructors yelled out.

The soldiers took turns performing a series of combinations, deflecting, then delivering, kicks and punches. Most of the soldiers had already deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan or both, some multiple times. Several said they had never had to fight hand-to-hand, but said the training had been useful, especially when detaining or searching suspected insurgents.

One student, Sgt. First Class Nkosi Campbell, who deployed twice to Iraq, described an incident in which a detainee tried to escape by rushing a soldier in his command. Instead of using his weapon, Campbell said, the soldier subdued his assailant with a combatives move.

"I was impressed," Campbell said.



Instructors monitored the soldiers closely, telling them not to strike each other with full force. The floors were covered with thick mats and the class members wore padded helmets, boxing gloves and shin-pads.

Each soldier gets a checklist of warning signs that could signal a potential concussion, including disorientation, nausea, ringing in the ears, balance problems and headaches.

"This program is about providing soldiers with the tools necessary to survive combat and safely come home and be with their families," said Capt. Jason Cumiford, then the commander of the combatives school at Fort Benning and a competitor in the inter-military tournaments. "It does nothing for us to get these guys hurt in training."

Despite the safety precautions, ProPublica and NPR reporters observed a soldier get kicked in the head during a sparring match toward the end of the class. He wasn't knocked unconscious, but he looked dazed. A medic ran over to check him, shining a flashlight into his eyes, asking him to follow his finger. The soldier sat out for the remainder of the class and was later sent to a clinic for further evaluation.

Staff Sgt. James Hanson, the master trainer at Fort Benning, said that he continues to change the course to make it safer. He said he has increased the number of breaks between drills, and teaches the soldiers to mix in punches and kicks to the body with blows to the head.

Hanson and other officials at Fort Benning told ProPublica and NPR that soldiers haven't sustained many concussions at the classes there. A researcher working on the study, who wanted to remain unnamed because he's not authorized to speak publicly about the research, said they haven't gathered enough evidence to confirm that.

Dromerick, of the National Rehabilitation Hospital, said that the military must find the right balance between ensuring soldiers' safety and providing them with proper training.

"If they can become effective in the battlefield and they don't have to suffer concussions, or the concussions can be rare or less severe, then that's obviously the way to go," he said.

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New York Daily News

Congress Ready for Reform: Female Service Members Victimized By Sexual Assault Need Help

By Alison Gendar and Heidi Evans

For nearly three decades, the U.S military has paid little more than lip service to the problem of sexual assault within its ranks.

There have been congressional hearings and table-thumping "zero tolerance" pronouncements, yet tens of thousands of service members are still victimized every year, by the Pentagon's own admission.

But finally, a reform effort is gaining traction — the result, lawmakers and advocates say, of women speaking out in lawsuits against the government and two powerful film documentaries that have caught the attention of Capitol Hill.

A widening sex-abuse scandal at Lackland Airforce Base in Texas — where 15 male instructors have been charged or are under investigation for sexually preying on 38 young female trainees — has also put the issue back on the front burner.

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In an interview this month, incoming Air Force Chief Mark Welsh III conceded sexual assault "has the potential to rip the fabric of your force apart. I think it is doing that to a certain extent now....I'm not an expert in this. I don't know how to fix it, but I won't quit working on it."

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), who has introduced several of more than two dozen reform bills now pending in Congress said the time for change is now.

"Our brave service members answer a call higher than any other to defend our nation," said Gillibrand. "We have a moral obligation to act this year on these bills because not only does sexual assault do unconscionable harm to the victim, it also destabilizes our military and threatens our national security."

Under pressure from Congress and veterans advocates during his 14 month tenure, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta has said "even one assault is too many" and has announced several new policies to combat sexual assault in the ranks. They include expanding legal assistance and quicker transfers for victims from their perpetrators, and keeping forensic evidence and investigation reports on file for 50 years. Sexual assault records used to be kept for no longer than two years.

A host of broader reforms awaiting Congress' attention when members return September 10 would:

- * Create a special victims unit in the military's legal division, with trained investigators and prosecutors.
- * Make colonels and those with higher ranks responsible for handling sex abuses cases, now overseen by lower-ranking commanders.



- * Create a separate panel outside the chain of command, made up of civilian and military professionals, that would decide if an alleged sexual crime goes to trial.

- * Strengthen military penalties for rape, sexual assault, harassment and domestic violence and end the practice of giving convicted attackers nonjudicial or administrative punishment.

- * Allow service members to seek redress in federal court for the military's failure to investigate or prosecute a sexual crime.

In Fiscal Year 2011, there were 3,191 reports of sexual assault made to the Department of Defense. However, because these crimes are so underreported, the Department of Defense estimated the number of sexual assault victims was more than 19,000 last year. And as many as 34,000 assaults when the department conducted its previous anonymous survey in 2006. The numbers include attacks on both men and women.

"The legislators understand these crimes affect the core mission of the military, to work as a team to accomplish a mission," said Greg Jacob, policy director for the advocacy group SWAN — Service Women's Action Network. "If you have members and leadership assaulting other members it breaks down the adhesion and esprit de corp."

Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.) has made 22 speeches on the floor of the House in the last year, each time reading a heartbreaking letter from a female soldier with a sex abuse story.

Speier now has 125 co-sponsors to her bill to create a the special panel to prosecute sex crimes, but expects strong resistance from military higher-ups.

Helen Benedict, who first called attention to the issue of sexual assault in the military in her 2009 book "The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving In Iraq," said the most important reforms must come from within the military.

"The culture has to be changed not only from the top down but from the bottom up. There has to be accountability and consequences from the squad leader all the way to the general," said Benedict, who is also a professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. "Most important are the NCOs — the sergeants and platoon leaders who live with the troops day in and day out and who must build respect and trust in their ranks.

"When troops don't respect each other and don't believe there will be consequences for predatory and bullying behavior, that's when things break down," she added.

New York City filmmakers Marcia Rock and Patricia Lee Stotter, who made "Service: When Women Come Marching Home," said they hope their documentary and Kirby Dick's 2012 Sundance winner "The Invisible War" will spark civilian interest in these horrific crimes.

"Until the voices of these female veterans are heard, neither the U.S. government nor the military will do what it takes to change a military culture that enables rape, sending women home to fight physical and psychological battles for the rest of their lives," Stotter said.

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Army Times

Complicated Claims Slow Down VA Payments

By Rick Maze

More complex disability claims filed by new veterans and supplemental claims for increased benefits appear to be the major factors in the large and still growing backlog of unprocessed claims.

Veterans Affairs Department officials have cited complexity as one reason for a backlog of 866,928 compensation and pension claims piled up at its regional offices, including 575,711 that are more than 125 days old.

VA data shows that Iraq- and Afghanistan-era veterans are averaging slightly more than nine disability issues per claim, far more than any other generation of veterans since World War II.

Gerald Manar of Veterans of Foreign Wars said he has seen claims with up to 75 separate disability issues -- and has heard of one that lists 125 disabilities.

"It looks like some people are going through their medical and personnel records and writing down every time they went to the clinic and every time they saw a corpsman, for a splinter or for something more serious, because they don't want to leave anything out," said Manar, deputy director of VFW's national veterans service.

More medical problems

Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are filing claims with more total disabilities for several reasons, Manar said.

For one thing, these wars have seen much greater use of National Guard and reserve troops than earlier conflicts. Reservists "tend to be older than their active-duty counterparts, making them more subject to wear and tear on their bodies," Manar said.

He also noted that many troops deployed multiple times to Iraq or Afghanistan or both, while most Vietnam vets -- whose claims average less than six disability issues -- deployed for one year and then left active duty.

"More deployments means they are subject to greater opportunity to be exposed to [improvised explosive devices] and other hazards," he said. "The greater time deployed, the greater opportunity for injury." Joe Violante of Disabled American Veterans said another factor in claims complexity is outreach.

"When I got out, I barely knew what benefits were available. Today, there is a big difference in awareness," said Violante, DAV's national legislative director and a Marine Corps veteran who left service in 1972.

Pre-separation briefings are making troops smarter about getting service-connected medical conditions documented in their records, Violante said.



"I really don't think they are whiners," he said. "These are people doing what they should, and what has been recommended to them, so they can receive the benefits they have earned." The general rise in awareness also is reaching veterans of earlier generations with medical problems they may not have thought of as service-connected.

Violante said one Vietnam vet recently called DAV for help on finding a private doctor to work on an artificial limb "because the duct tape he'd been using wasn't working anymore." The veteran was surprised to learn VA would help him -- if only he would ask.

Neither Violante nor Manar said he believes an increase in mental health-related issues is a major reason Iraq- and Afghanistan-era vets are filing more claims.

That in itself "is not a reason for the backlog," Violante said. "We know about 20 percent of returning veterans have reported mental health issues, but that is just one of the many disabilities they appear to be claiming."

A sharp spike

Since 2001, claims received by VA have jumped 94 percent, with 1.3 million received in fiscal 2011. VA records also show the number of people involved in processing claims has risen 97 percent over the same period.

Of 866,928 benefits claims pending as of Aug. 18, 37 percent were new. The rest were supplemental claims, mostly from people already getting disability benefits seeking to increase their ratings by adding disabilities or showing their disabilities had worsened.

Only 31 percent of original claims in the backlog are from Iraq- and Afghanistan-era veterans; 30 percent are from Vietnam-era veterans or survivors, 19 percent from veterans of the 1991 Persian Gulf War and the rest from other generations.

VA records show processing time is slowing. In 2001, the average time to complete a claim was 181 days; that's now 257 days.

Accuracy on claims decisions also has regressed. In 2001, VA had an 81 percent accuracy rate. VA officials said the rate improved to a peak of 90 percent in 2006 but has slipped to 86 percent today.

Violante said he doesn't put much faith in VA's pledge to begin reducing the backlog by 2015.

"We've seen a change in mindset in the top leadership of VA to get something done, but I don't believe the culture that has allowed the backlog to grow has changed," he said.

Despite some improvements, Manar said, "It still looks like it will be more than 20 years before the backlog is eliminated."

Complex claims

One reason the Veterans Affairs Department's backlog of pending disability claims has remained high is that veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the 1991 Persian Gulf War, are filing more



complicated claims, listing more medical problems, than veterans of earlier conflicts. The average number of medical conditions per disability claim, by conflict era:

Iraq/Afghanistan wars: 9.14

1991 Persian Gulf War: 7.53

Vietnam War: 5.21

Korean War: 3.84

World War II: 3.71

SOURCE: Veterans Affairs Department staff

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